

Steamy Interview with Seth Peterson

ON HIS NEW FILM *SEDONA*, *BURN NOTICE*, *HATE CRIME*, AND MORE

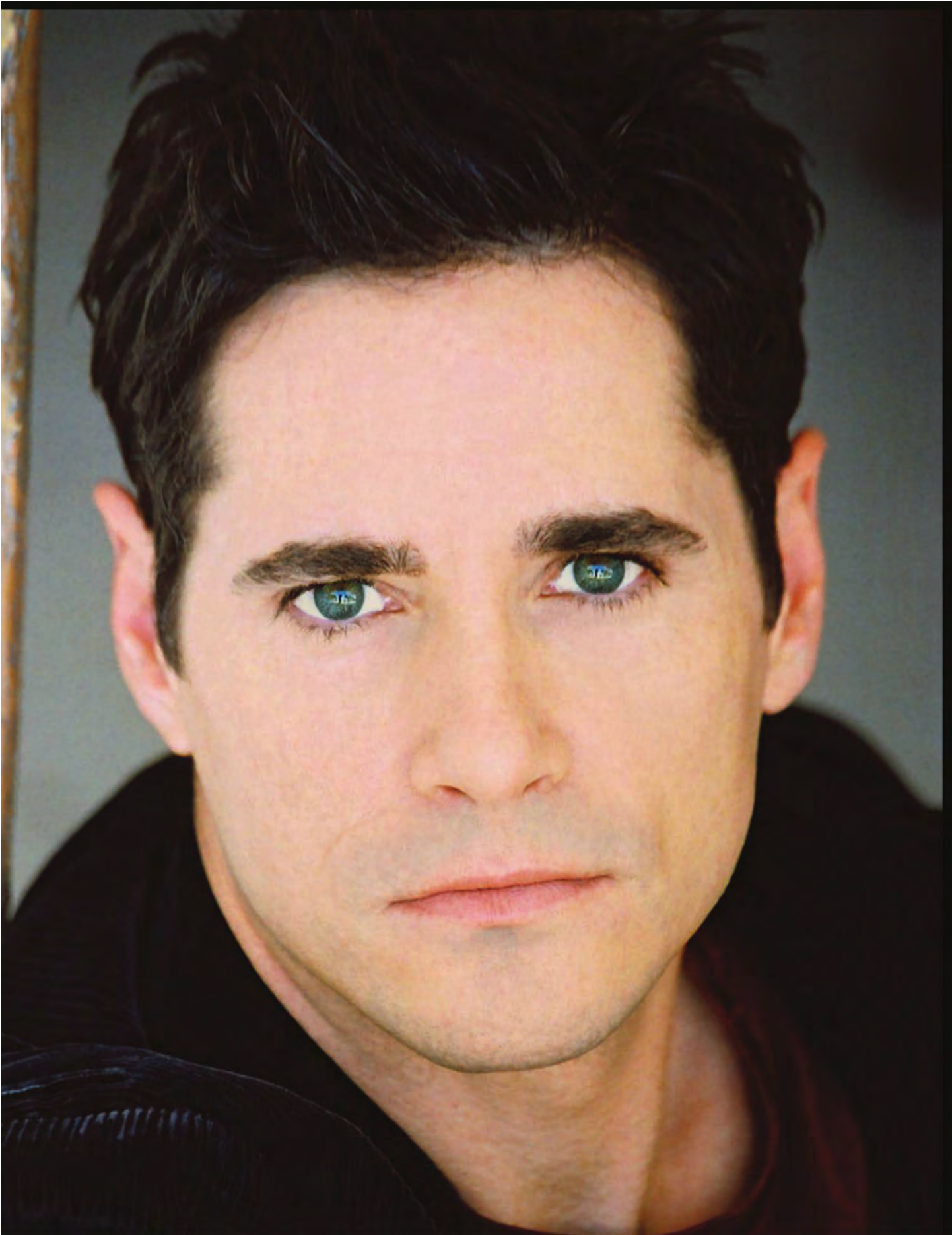
Best known for his roles on *Providence*, *Burn Notice* and a slew of other television shows, actor Seth Peterson is our notable personality of the month because of his record of on and off-screen work furthering the cause of equality for all. He is one of those people who offer an incredibly inclusive presence, to everyone they interact with and reach.

by bixi b craig We met up at a crêpe joint in Hollywood, which turned out to be unfit for an interview recording. The genuinely kind and accommodating person he is, Seth Peterson took me on an ad hoc drive up Mulholland Drive. The following account is the product of lively chatter accompanied by lots of laughter that occurred over the course that afternoon.

When he is not involved in a major network series, Peterson likes to spend time with his family, enjoy music and video games, write poetry, catch up with his fans on Twitter, and pick up “passion projects” in his own words.

Looking back at the horrific events of this year, we had to brush on his leading role in the award-winning feature film *Hate Crime*, a sensitively deployed vigilante type thriller that raised the standards of gay film. In it, Peterson plays the surviving partner of a victimized gay couple, who with his neighbor (Lin Shaye) and would-be mother-in-law (Cindy Pickett) crafts a desperate ploy to bring his lover’s killer to justice. The film deals with heavy subject matters such as bias-motivated violence, distrust of law enforcement agencies, ill-directed teachings motivated by faith, and internalized homophobia.

Having been around people that don’t fit into the “straight” norm his whole life, Peterson is stunned by the deep-rooted prejudice against the LGBT population that still exists. “When you see those videos of the ‘50s, when basically all the movements began, the violence that erupted from them makes me sick to my stomach. And the fact that this happens today on a smaller scale still puzzles me. I don’t get it. One thing that has always made me insane is the injustice here. I have a personal intolerance for any kind of injustice,” he said.



In his latest movie, *Sedona*, he plays a gay family man who embarks on a life-changing journey with his partner and their two sons. In stark contrast to the premise of his first film *Hate Crime*, director Tommy Stovall grants no discourse to the sexual orientation of the main characters in *Sedona*. The central plot revolves around the fateful experiences that the visitors to mystical Sedona, AZ make over the course of a day. It's a satirical take on the hectic lifestyle of executives, all while paying homage to the town director Stovall fell in love with. He had originally considered doing a series based in Sedona, but a film seemed fiscally more feasible.

Talking about the movie, which just premiered on major U.S. cable, satellite, and TelCo platforms, Peterson shared that he is just as out of touch with such pastime activities as camping and hiking and in touch with tech gadgets as his character in *Sedona*. Scott, an attorney, is less than thrilled about the vacation his partner takes him on for his birthday and at one point gets so frustrated he refuses to take a picture with his kids, declaring, "I'm not having any fun!"

On the emotions expressed in the scenes shot in the picturesque outskirts of Sedona, Peterson laughed and recounted, "It was not the kind of 'vacation' I wanted to be on, either. I had just finished doing a show for JJ Abrams [*Undercovers*] I was doing a stunt and had ripped my meniscus and ACL (anterior cruciate ligament) literally three days before. I finished the shoot, packed, flew out and spent the next few days hiking in the area in the mountains. Then I got my surgery right after I got home. So, there was a lot of pain, a lot of crying and limping. I don't know if you noticed in the movie, I tried to cover it, but there's a little bit of limping going on. I was blessed to have a really great script to play with, and I had a lot of fun doing my work, but it was hot and painful."

His recurring role on USA's *Burn Notice* has garnered Peterson an ever-growing fan base. For the past six seasons he portrayed Nate, Michael Westen's (Jeffrey Donovan) troubled younger brother on the action dramedy. When Michael left the family home to join the military and pursue a career in espionage, Nate gravitated toward the darker side of Miami, mingling with car thieves, gamblers, and other unsavory folk. He finds himself and his associates wrapped up in dangerous situations and turns to his big brother for help.

Peterson is excited that season six of *Burn Notice* shows a more integrated and respectable Nate Westen, who actually becomes part of the action team. He gets to go on undercover operations and help fight villains, and looking pretty cool doing so. Following a tragic event, the entire season somehow becomes about Nate.

Recalling his favorite scene with Jeffrey Donovan, he shared, "It was in the episode 'Brotherly Love,' the scene in which we're dressed up in the suits. We pull up in the town car and we get out and we're both undercover as these car thieves and I come out and he's got this odd, very deliberate '50s style cadence and my version of it is worse, my idea was the really bad version of the cadence, 'cause Nate is always somehow 20 steps behind Michael, all the time. And that turned into a really fun scene." Watching her sons dress up for this mission, their on-screen mother Madeline, cast by the fabulous Sharon Gless, added more comic relief to the scene when she shouted, "And you have to dress like a funeral director!?"

Remembering that scene's panache and Nate's wardrobe on the show in general, I had to ask if he had any influence on his character's funky, urban street style. "Yeah! Totally, I mean, for the whole time! The Ed Hardy kind of stuff [laughing], I like to wear some terrible shirts. It all started when I bumped into Christian Audigier, the guy who owns the company on Melrose. I was sitting there, we were chatting, and I was thinking, these guys were all wearing leather and these crazy outfits and I thought, 'there is only one normal one in the group' and that was the guy who is the designer, Christian Audigier. So I was like 'I work on this show,' and he was like, 'Wanna wear my clothes on your show?' And I was like, 'Why not?' And he gave me a bunch of them. That's how



that happened."

On working with show runner Matt Nix, Peterson commented, "He makes me incredibly uncomfortable because he is so smart. He is one of those incredibly brilliant guys. Being able to work with someone like that is really special. You basically just sit there and soak up as much as you can."

Peterson loves to entertain and interact with his Twitter friends. Having joined the "Twitterverse" just recently, he got verified swiftly and his time line is already trending. "I just kind of got into it. I started following celebrities and I thought it was really boring and then I started chatting with people. 'And who are you?' I told them who I was and they didn't really believe me and so it started there. You know, I tried to get people believing who I was and then throughout that little drama it turned out people where like, 'Oh you are who you are, and I want to be your friend on Twitter' and I was like, 'Sweet, we're cool!'"

Has he made any meaningful connections? Absolutely. He has met some really amazing people, including a woman named Courtney who helped him with his Twitter lists. He and his wife went out to visit her in Canada. The trip turned into a true adventure, which is still referenced to in the occasional tweet.

On his daily interaction with followers, Peterson said, "The blessing is that people are interested. I have the opportunity to share something with somebody who is interested and that is really flattering in a very exciting proposition. I welcome it."

Other than tweets and scripts, Peterson enjoys reading classic comic books such as the *X-Men* series, Don Newton's work and *Watchmen*.

Up Next: Seth Peterson is cast in a production of J.B. Priestley's acclaimed 1932 play *Dangerous Corner*, which opens on Thursday, September 20 at Crown City Theatre Company in North Hollywood. For tickets and information go to crowncitytheatre.com. For info on his other projects and good banter follow his twitter feed @SethPetersonLA.